

An Improbably Moveable Mediterranean: Translating, Transplanting, & Transforming Global Surrealisms

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ABSTRACT

Le groupe Surréaliste égyptien Art et Liberté fit l'objet de deux expositions entre 2016 et 2018. La plus importante, montée par Sam Bardaouil et Till Fellrath, met l'accent sur sa résonance internationale et sur la complexité de son engagement dans différents aspects du surréalisme, parmi lesquels le manifeste de Breton et de Trotski en 1938, ou les relectures anarchistes du surréalisme initiées sous l'égide de Henry Miller par le groupe de la Villa Seurat et qui gagnèrent le mouvement de la Nouvelle Apocalypse en Angleterre ainsi que les autres écrivains de langue anglaise en Égypte et aux États-Unis. La seconde exposition, organisée aux Emirats Arabes Unis par la Sharjah Art Foundation et les commissaires Hoor Al Qasimi, Salah M. Hassan, Ehab Ellaban et Nagla Samir, insiste davantage sur les affinités marxistes du groupe et le considère comme le précurseur de l'art instrumentaliste du Groupe d'Art Contemporain Égyptien. Les commentaires critiques ont souligné l'héritage trotskiste de ce mouvement. Cependant, les réseaux anarchistes qui distribuaient les œuvres du groupe Art et Liberté, ainsi que sa conception anti-bourgeoise de l'individu, n'ont pas été pris en compte, ce qui limite considérablement l'interprétation. Cet article montre comment ces affiliations politiques complexes caractérisent un groupe qui, à l'instar de la mer méditerranéenne, constitue un pivot, plutôt qu'une frontière, entre les mouvements internationaux et les idéologies.

Keywords : Surrealism, post-Surrealism, anarchism, Trotsky, Art et Liberté, Marxism, Egypt

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“the sort of book that precedes revolutions, and begets revolution, if the tongue of man possesses any power[, yet...] they do not speak like the professional agitators indoctrinated with Marxism” (Miller, “Novels” 182)

Prior to the Second World War, an improbable series of challenges confronted Surrealism and pressed for an anarchist turn in its politics and techniques, insisting particularly on the importance of the individual exercising choice autonomously. However, most readings of this change obscure the political nature of its revisions to Surrealism and are too easily caught up in the wider and more visible transformation of Parisian Surrealism, particularly André Breton’s collaboration with Leon Trotsky on the *Manifesto for an Independent Revolutionary Art* signed by Breton and Diego Rivera (Service 454). The anarchist change was improbable because it occurred at the same time in England and Egypt as well as among expatriate groups in Paris centred around Henry Miller at the Villa Seurat. The Villa Seurat group in Paris, through interactions with Herbert Read and David Gascoyne, pressed for an anarchist revision to English Surrealism following the 1936 London International Surrealist Exhibition, which in turn led to the formation of the New Apocalypse group just prior to the War. At the same time in Egypt, the impact of the Nazi *Entartete Kunst* (degenerate art) exhibition in Munich resulted in the creation of the antithetical *Art et Liberté* group and the international distribution and translation of its manifesto “Long Live Degenerate Art!” that rebutted fascism in the same year as the *Manifesto for an Independent Revolutionary Art*. To complicate this further, the Egyptian manifesto used terms akin to yet distinct from Trotsky, Rivera, and Breton – the same distinctions recur for anarchist post-Surrealist groups in San Francisco and Vancouver. Even more improbably, the British and Egyptian groups were pressed together in Egypt during the Second World War, which provoked further development based on their previous interactions in Paris. As the war ended, their works were distributed and published in California through their collaborative network, and their revision to Surrealism later continued in Vancouver, Canada, into the 1960s. The central conceit here is that the Mediterranean has been improbably moveable across its history. It is more a dense network of interconnections and literally a passageway than it is a barrier. So the Mediterranean was for

Surrealism: a joint or articulation linking outward in many and every direction.

This paper retraces the several networks of English translations and thereby international distributions of Albert Cosseray's and Georges Henein's works from Cairo to London, New York, and San Francisco as well as the dissemination of an anarchist revision to Surrealism across these international groups. At a metacritical level, this retracing of their history refers to the interpretive responses to the 2016–2018 exhibition *Art et Liberté: Rupture, War and Surrealism in Egypt (1938–1948)*. Responses to the exhibition have largely disregarded the careful integration of Trotskyist and anarchist thematics in the exhibition's catalogue and related monograph *Surrealism in Egypt: Modernism and the Art and Liberty Group*—they instead present an ideologically pure Trotskyist understanding of the movements involved that, as Sam Bardaouil has noted, leads to an emphasis on colonialism and discourses of decolonization that may misrepresent or over-simplify the complexities of the relations involved.

The story of *Art et Liberté* is about connections, but perhaps more importantly, the group's story also works as a joint, linking and connecting across great distances and major cultural or stylistic differences. From their exhibitions and manifestos in Egypt, the artists of *Art et Liberté* connected outward around the globe and drew in an extraordinary range of other artists and writers. They were transformed by the experience and shared it from Cairo to California. Where we are accustomed to thinking of their relationships as a one way road to—or rather, from—Paris, Surrealism, and André Breton, we may instead see them spiralling outward like a vortex among their own generation with a politics of the personal that is rich in mutual support and distribution as well as enriched by disparate connections to seemingly unrelated groups around the world. The vortex is not a coincidental description. The anarchist politics underpinning Vorticism as a movement have recently received renewed critical attention in Mark Antliff and Scott W. Klein's exhibition and book, *Vorticism: New Perspectives* (103–115). In a kindred sense, the anarchist thematics often overlooked in Vorticism also characterize *Art et Liberté* and its unexpected relationship with radical art and literature of the 1930s and 40s. The same thematics connect *Art et Liberté* to the group *Harper's Magazine* called "The New Cult of Sex and Anarchy" (Brady 312) in Big Sur and Berkeley, California, as well as to the later neo-Surrealism in the 1960s. All three also have further surprising affinities to the development of English post-Surrealism after the 1936 London International Surrealist Exhibition based on ties to the Villa Seurat group in Paris that centred around Henry Miller, including the Syrian

artist Amr Nimr who later participated in *Art et Liberté* and hosted its exhibitions in her Cairo salon (Bardaouil 159, 162).

The intensity of these networks around an anarchist revision to Surrealism suggests three things: (1) the subsequent development of anarchist forms of post-Surrealism and neo-Surrealism spiral out from these networks' influence, (2) critical interpretations based on Trotsky, Breton, and Rivera's *Manifesto for an Independent Revolutionary Art* tend to obscure the anarchist rationale for an artist's conscious manipulation of surrealist effects, and (3) critics would benefit from recognizing the deep value in the individual to these networks, even amidst their practices of solidarity and mutual aid. Clarifying what has been obscured demands recuperating these anarchist perspectives.

Historical narrative

In Paris, Henry Miller began reconceptualizing Surrealist praxis in the early 1930s. Much of his resistance to the communist affiliations of the Surrealists at the time is visible in his correspondence. This is overt in his letters to Herbert Read from October 1935 through to his distribution of "An Open Letter to Surrealists Everywhere" and its eventual publication in 1939. During the same period, Amy Nimr lived for a time in the Villa Seurat, where Miller lived after publication of his *Tropic of Cancer* (and that he had frequented previously – the opening scene of the novel is set in the same building). In his correspondence with the British writer Lawrence Durrell, the refutation of a Marxist understanding of Surrealism becomes explicit. As a result, the conscious manipulation of Surrealist unconscious effects became normalized and disseminated among the English Surrealists who would break away from the Marxist orientation of the movement to form the New Apocalypse. This is the vortex around one figure, but there are more.

Amidst all of this stands a dense network of little magazines and systems of mutual publication. In Paris, Miller, Durrell, Anaïs Nin, and Alfred Perlès produced *The Booster* from September 1937 to January 1938, which was followed by *Delta* under Durrell's editorship from April 1938 until April 1939 with the last issue managed by Gascoyne and published by John Goodland, who held a key role in the New Apocalypse in England. Overlapping in this timeline, John Waller founded *Bolero* as an Oxford student poetry magazine in the summer of 1938. It included obliquely politicized commentary, such as Herbert Howarth's "Deannarchist" and critiques of Christopher Caudwell's conceptualization of bourgeois freedom, especially bourgeois freedom's insistence that the "individual" is a product

of and regressive entrapment in capitalist society. It ran until spring 1939 when it was replaced by the more overtly political *Kingdom Come*. It had several contributions from the New Apocalypse poets and those who had been involved in the Villa Seurat. The New Apocalypse sought a revision to Surrealism distinct from the position taken by the English Surrealists following on the London International Surrealist Exhibition. They emphasized, in Miller's shadow, the conscious intervention of the individual and an overtly anarchist understanding of subjectivity and authority as a way of revising surrealist praxis.

Kingdom Come ran in this form from November 1939 until summer 1941 when Waller entered service in Egypt, bringing a full print run of the magazine with him, which he shared with Durrell, who had published in it, and also with the *Art et Liberté* group. It continued in England under Henry Treece, Stefan Schimanski, and Alan Rook's editorship for four further issues from November-December 1941 until autumn 1943, with a stronger New Apocalypse presence. Likewise, from summer 1938 until spring 1940, Nicholas Moore edited *Seven*, published by John Goodland, who had published the final issue of *Delta*. In fact, it appears as if materials not yet published in *Delta* were folded into *Seven*. Again at the same time, several of the writers involved in these journals found themselves in Egypt: Durrell and Bernard Spencer fled Greece as the Nazis launched their invasion; Waller and G.S. Fraser for service; and Herbert Howarth had already taken a teaching position in the country. One there, Durrell, Spencer, Terence Tiller, and Robin Fedden founded the journal *Personal Landscape*, which ran from January 1942 until the end of the war in 1945. They did not include *Art et Liberté* members apart from Amy Nimr, but Durrell later lamented not including Georges Henein, and he helped disseminate Henein and Cossery's materials for publication in America. Moreover, Howarth, Waller, Fraser and their affiliates Erik de Mauny and Harold Edwards were involved in translating works by *Art et Liberté* members for publication in English, particularly Albert Cossery.

In Egypt, the *Art et Liberté* group developed its own revised understanding of Surrealism and launched its manifesto "Long Live Degenerate Art!" in 1938 to defy the Nazi *Entartete Kunst* exhibition, but this act was foreshadowed by previous connections. As noted, Nimr had already interacted with Henry Miller, who introduced her to the Greek painter Mayo who lived beneath him in the Villa Seurat (Bardaouil 163). The overlaps are improbable: Miller was corresponding with Herbert Read about Surrealism amidst the intense stage of work completing his "An Open Letter to Surrealists Everywhere" while Nimr was "at her most accomplished

surrealist phase” (Bardaouil 163). Over that same period, Durrell met her while participating in the correspondence between Miller and Read, and he offered his career-spanning concept of the Heraldic Universe as a point-by-point refutation of the socialist alignment of Surrealism and defence of Miller’s anarchist revision to surrealist praxis (Miller & Read 60–62; Durrell & Miller 17–19; Gifford 2010 : 61–4). Indeed, to close the circle, after Durrell and Miller prompted the anarchist revisions to English Surrealism by the New Apocalypse, it was Nimr’s husband Walter Smart who offered Durrell employment when he arrived in Egypt as a refugee, after which a number of the New Apocalypse poets arrived in service, keeping up their old network through correspondence.

In the midst of this artistic activity and mutual aid, 1937 saw the defeat and fragmentation of the anarchists in Spain in the “Barcelona May Days” and the open conflict of Stalin-backed communist Republicans against the anarchists rather than their mutual opponent in Franco’s fascists. This provides the immediate backdrop. Durrell contrasted his position in Greece directly against the Spanish Civil War in the opening of his 1937 novel *Panic Spring* (1–2). The networks in Egypt during the war were further diversified through contributions of Italian intellectuals, such as Giulio Tavernari, the Italian anti-fascist activist who edited the journal *Quaderni di Giustizia e libertà* in Cairo for the Italian Justice and Freedom group that supported the anarchists in Catalonia. Tavernari also contributed to English publications under the pseudonym Stefano Terra for Fraser and Waller. Through Tavernari, the Scottish poet Hamish Henderson encountered Antonio Gramsci’s *Prison Letters*, which he began translating in 1947 but only published in its completed form in 1974. It is a richly overlapping milieu.

Durrell and Miller were at this time published by the American anarchist poet Robert Duncan in Woodstock, New York, and both Duncan and Miller eventually settled near San Francisco. Here, Miller resumed contact with many of his collaborators from the Villa Seurat, including the artist Jean Varda, and in this milieu George Leite began the magazine *Circle* and daliel’s bookstore. The latter prefigures City Lights, which republished the books first issued in Leite’s Circle Editions. Leite and Miller mingled with the San Francisco Renaissance through Duncan and Kenneth Rexroth. Circle was indebted to Miller’s understanding of Surrealism and quickly turned to book publications, such as works by Durrell and Cossery sent from Egypt via Miller, and at the same time Rexroth emphasized the New Apocalypse poets in his *The New British Poets*.

Further reformation and development later came through the Vancouver-based Neo-Surrealist Research Foundation out of the University

of British Columbia. Murray Morton edited its journal *Limbo* under the guidance of the British writer and translator Michael Bullock who had been connected to the New Apocalypse. George Woodcock supported the group as well, but it conflicted with developing anarchist voices such as Wayne Burns. The sense of Surrealism across these groups, locations, and times is, however, remarkably akin.

In sum, what happened in Egypt travelled far and wide and in many more directions all at once. As in the ancient world, the sea becomes a point of connection rather than a barrier. And in this network, the points of connection cluster around the Mediterranean more than anywhere else.

Manifestos

The manifestos of these diverse groups share one common trait: a rationale based on the artist's conscious manipulation of unconscious effects such as automatism. In this, they all emphasize and privilege the individual. As I have noted previously, Miller's correspondences and "An Open Letter to Surrealists Everywhere," the New Apocalypse's Personalism, and Leite's Circle are all overtly anarchist in orientation. My further suggestion is that they are, as a consequence, nearly entirely forgotten in the mainstream of critical studies of the period and of Surrealism. *Art et Liberté* were part of that lost history until Bardaouil and Fellrath's important recuperative project in 2016, as well as Salah M. Hassan's *When Art Becomes Liberty* (the two competing exhibitions opened within three weeks of each other). However, the challenge of this dual recuperation is how to deal with two different boundaries of interpretation. Responses to Bardaouil's work have emphasized a Trotskyist paradigm for *Art et Liberté*, which reductively simplifies his critical argument for collaborative networks to the established understandings of Surrealism and his explicit argument that the group "was not compelled to align itself with Trotskyism" (Bardaouil 53). In contrast, Hassan's projects have sought to reconfigure the history of modernism from outside of a Eurocentric subject position and in an expressly Marxist perspective, a posture much aligned with the responses to Bardaouil published to date and the critical work of Ondřej Beránek (205) and Jeff O'Brien (22).

Interpretations of the *Art et Liberté* manifesto "Long Live Degenerate Art" are likewise divergent. As I have argued (Gifford 2016 : 14), the subsequent 1945 "Manifesto" presses for an anarchist interpretation. However, Bardaouil is closest to the complexity of the various figures involved when he writes "The Surrealists' search for a political doctrine that

could best serve their revolutionary creative aspirations would see many of them shift from the Communism of Stalin to the Marxism of Trotsky, and eventually to a version of anarchism that in 1943 would be described by Herbert Read as the ‘Politics of the unpolitical.’” (151). The striking feature of the manifesto, however, is that which a contemporary reader could not help but attach it to: the Spanish Civil War and fascist atrocities. The verso side of the manifesto included the image of Pablo Picasso’s *Guernica*. While Picasso’s politics are complicated and often dubious, Patricia Leighton’s projects *Re-Ordering the Universe: Picasso & Anarchism* and *The Liberation of Painting: Modernism & Anarchism in Avant-Guerre Paris* have shown how Picasso’s early anarchism and extensive work with anarchists (prior to his post-Second World War turn to Communism) are visible in his formal innovations and anti-nationalist critical integration of primitivism. As she argues, “For key artists in these movements, anarchist aesthetics and a related ‘politics of form’ played crucial roles in the development of their modernist art in avant-guerre France, but its significance was first suppressed and then forgotten” (*Liberation* 2), and more specifically “collages as incorporating newsprint stories [are] suggestive of the private as opposed to the public realm” (137). She further draws out from Picasso the specific newspaper excerpts in collages such as *Bottle of Suze* and *Bouteille, verre et journal sur une table* pointing to his anarchist milieu and pacifism. Allan Antliff has developed these arguments further in relation to *Guernica* in “Guernica: A Political Odyssey.” My contention is that rather than an overt alignment with Trotsky, the manifesto, its offspring in “Manifesto,” and the incorporation of Picasso’s *Guernica* make a more coherent unit if friendly relations with anarchist thought, particularly akin to the anarchist revision to Surrealism espoused by Miller, are given greater attention.

Nonetheless, critical responses to the recent *Art et Liberté* exhibition have emphasized ties to Trotsky and elided any meaningful connections with anarchism, anarchist praxis, or the importance of form in anarchist art, such as Read’s emphasis on open form as antiauthoritarian in abstract art (Antliff 2008 : 6). It is difficult to reconcile the acceptance of a form of anarchy in revolutionary art in Trotsky and Breton, under party direction, with Henein’s later “Manifesto” in which,

Our grievance against Marxism lies not in its leaning towards revolution, but on the contrary, to its taking a starchy, stagnant, reactionary stance [...] We consider the individual as the only thing of worth, yet today, seemingly, it is under relentless fire from all sides. We declare that the individual is in

possession of largely unexplored inner faculties, the most important of which is imagination [...]

The individual against State-Tyranny. (151)

In this revision, it is difficult to understand “freedom” in the “Long Live Degenerate Art” manifesto as the freedom of the proletariat to work in solidarity toward the party’s ambitions while recognizing the “individual” as a manifestation of a bourgeois capitalist mode of production. Instead, “freedom” operates in relation to a sense of the creative individual that is both antiauthoritarian and prone to conceptualizations of subjectivity either rooted in or with much coherence garnered from anarchism. For an anti-bourgeois movement to root itself in the individual in this sense challenges the orientation toward Trotsky.

Later in Vancouver, the anarchist George Woodcock took a professorial post at the University of British Columbia. He had published *NOW* during the war years in London and his work overlapped at several points with the New Apocalypse, including his relationship with Alex Comfort who edited *New Road* and was closely tied to Charles Wrey Gardiner’s Grey Walls Press. Comfort also relocated to California for a research and teaching position. At the University of British Columbia, Woodcock was joined by the surrealist Michael Bullock, who took a teaching position in the Creative Writing Department and had been at the fringes of English Surrealism in London. In Vancouver, he fostered new surrealist developments akin to the New Apocalypse and adapted in kindred ways by his student Murray Morton for the journal *Limbo: A Paraliterary Journal of Survivalism*, which ran from 1963–67. Morton called his revised notion of Surrealism, much related to Bullock’s, “neo-Surrealism,” and its features are telling as a continuation. Bullock, later in 1981, articulated his framework by stressing the same conscious manipulation of unconscious effects or automatism that the New Apocalypse has emphasized within an anarchist paradigm that valued the individual without giving in to bourgeoisdom:

the essence of surrealism lies in the attempt to attain “surreality” by resolving the contradiction between dream and reality (as well as many other similar dichotomies, such as the conscious and the unconscious, the individual and the group, man and nature and so on), to liberate the latent forces of man and society.... [I]t has now become necessary in discussing surrealism to recall that the unconscious too is only one part of the mind and that the “total psychophysical field” includes consciousness as well. (18)

To this he adds the suggestive echo of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's phrasing of spontaneous organization to describe effective forms of Surrealism *after* the first Parisian emphases on automatism:

The most valuable and enduring works of surrealist writing... are demonstrably the product of a harmonious alliance between the conscious and the unconscious, with the unconscious providing the energy in the form of an upflow of imagery and the conscious exercising a *spontaneous* organizational role in channelling this flow into a coherent work. (19)

His stress on "spontaneous organization" is a key anarchist concept of authority being temporary and provisional without a rationale for its own continuance. This means that power and organization are inevitabilities in social life yet the "archons" (those with inherited or quasi-aristocratic positions of unjustified or ossified authority) are barred. In essence, for anarchism, spontaneous forms of order or organization are more robust and organic. They are more easily revised and dismantled than are externally imposed forms of organization that imply positions of authority or domination. Bullock goes on to emphasize the entertaining, informative, and transformative functions of fiction, distinguishing between social and individual transformation. He gives weight to Charles Dickens and Alexander Solzhenitsyn as the initiators of social transformation (from very different perspectives but both oriented toward liberation) while it is only "more rarely and with greater difficulty, [that fiction may transform] individual human lives" (20). Against these examples, which he situates in naturalism, he identifies only passingly the individualist alternative: "A surrealist novel, by contrast, is a truthful expression of the author's inner world or else a subjective transfiguration of the outer world" (22). We find the same in Morton's editorials for his journal *Limbo*, which presents neo-Surrealism in anarchist terms for relations and praxis, as well as through its reaching back to connect with Woodcock, Miller, Durrell, and the New Apocalypse (Woodcock 29–52). Even its disputes are within the anarchist community via its review in Woodcock's journal *Canadian Literature* by Wayne Burns as reviewer (77–79).

This careful retention of the individual and one's subject position as unique, as a thing beyond a Marxist economism or determinism, trembles terribly close to the *Art et Liberté* manifesto in which "we see the individual as the only thing of worth." It is also very near to the New Apocalypse concept expressed by Fraser when quoting Treece that "'order is at the best sterility, at the worst death.' (Sterility and death, of course, are also part of life)" (Fraser 7). Fraser's phrasing, when he draws out "organic" organization

and the work of the conscious mind revising the unconscious imagery through form, is strikingly anticipatory of Bullock's later revision to surrealism: "The New Apocalypse, in a sense, derives from Surrealism.... It denies what is negative—Surrealism's own denial of man's right to exercise conscious control, either of his political and social destinies, or of the material offered to him, as an artist, by his subconscious mind" (Fraser 3). It is also, naturally, very much in the same spirit as the subsequent Personalist articulation of the New Apocalypse given by Treece and Stefan Schimanski as

our Personalist belief rejects all politics which do not grow, organically, from living...; where lust for power and security have separated man from man, have disembodied the spirit, have disrupted the community and have made freedom the perquisite of the leisured few,

and Personalism

rejects those fascist systems which control the defects of society by curtailing the liberty of the individual, which subordinate the destinies of men to the whims of a Leader..., which denies them from their Selves....Personalism rejects all forms of government which ignore spiritual values, which do not see in man an autonomously creative unit whose supreme vocation is the understanding and healing of the Self. (Treece and Schimanski 13)

Personalism here is akin to the subsequent French tradition of Emmanuel Mounier and the early work of Paul Ricœur, and though distinct in their understanding of anarchism, both ideas of Personalism sensed that "power always leans on oppression" (Deweert 22). The effect of this sweep from the Villa Seurat group, *Art et Liberté*, the New Apocalypse, Circle, and neo-Surrealism is to draw out affinities with anarchist networks and anarchist praxis in the period between the movement's defeat in Spain in the 1937 Barcelona May Days to its return to activism in Paris in 1968. The rationale is to elicit these anarchist affinities even while retaining dialogue with other surrealist groups, in particular *Art et Liberté*'s ties to Breton and Bullock's insistence on asserting retroactive continuity on Surrealism. Morton's student relationship with Bullock and then inclusion of Arthur Moyse on anarchism in *Limbo* (16–21) further emphasizes his journal's position. What we find drawn in across the Mediterranean and then echoed outward in its vortex is a complex resituating of Surrealism through form, praxis, and often unspoken affiliation and mutual aid.

Interpretive responses; or, whence anarchism?

In both scholarly and mainstream responses to these groups, a critical scotoma elides anarchism. That is, the politics of these movements sits in our blind spot. This is either because (1) if one reads from a principally Marxist paradigm, the anarchist elements appear as bourgeois forms of individualism or the artist as a bourgeois construct formed symptomatically from the organization of labour in a capitalist society, or else (2) the often veiled or implicit antiauthoritarian sympathies fail to meet popularized notions of anarchism as violent terrorism or unthinking chaos. I have identified this trend elsewhere (Gifford *Personal*, xii, 7–8), and Bardaouil is exceptionally careful in balancing the shifting and continually revised positions taken by diverse participants in diffuse yet connected movements:

the fluidity by which Art and Liberty negotiated and proposed an alternative model and application to the French Marxist/Surrealist and English Anarchist/Post-Surrealist paradigms reflects a process of metamorphosis by which the group had no fear to operate beyond the confinements of a fixed intellectual position or defined movement. The term “Surrealist,” therefore, could be replaced with the term “free,” “frottage” could be discarded and “dépaysement” substituted with “subjective fantasy,” and Trotskyism” could be conceptually regarded as a model for “personal anarchism” rather than a post-Stalin hero-worship cult.... Art and Liberty provides us with an acute example of this anti-authoritarian current. (Bardaouil 172)

Andrea Flores remarked on the same hybridity of political view (98), as does Patrick Kane (98–99). Despite this, the general trend has been to either neuter any political element in these movements by casting them as “apolitical” (a particularly odd paradigm given the New Apocalypse’s explicit invocation and republication of Read’s anarchist essay “The Politics of the Unpolitical”) or else reframe it via Trotsky in a Marxist paradigm. Adam Tooze is careful while pressing on Trotsky and *Fédération internationale de l’art révolutionnaire indépendant* by also recognizing yet not commenting on the influence of Don LaCoss, who contributed regularly to anarchist publications. In contrast, where LaCoss is nuanced around anarchist movements (83, 111–13), Anneka Lennsen sees in them “imaginative socialism.” The horizon of possibility is limited to “other programs of the Egyptian Communist party, or [how some] sought to mobilize directly against the irredentism of Italian fascism, or against anti-Semitism” (n.p.). Antiauthoritarian or anarchist potentialities remain silenced. Her point, instead, is that conceiving of *Art et Liberté* must be

social with little room for bourgeois concepts like the individual (a word and concept that do not appear in her review of the exhibition). This paradigm fits *Art et Liberté* to the instrumentalist sense of art in the subsequent Contemporary Art Group and silences the anarchist emphasis on the individual as distinct from bourgeoisdom.

For Jonathan Guyer and Surti Singh, “The Art and Liberty Group forged connections with Surrealists and Trotskyists abroad” (n.p.) but no other groups merit mention. In the same vein, they argue for “the movement’s intrinsic value separate from the legacy of French or British Surrealism” (n.p.), which hinges on the term “value” rather than “paradigm” or even “network” and “collaborators.” Raphael Rubinstein presses this further, stressing the connections to Trotsky and socialism while minimizing the internationalism of the movement. Suggestively, his comment that “an English translation of Cossery’s book of short stories *The Men God Forgot* (published in 1944 by Circle Editions, an anarchist press in Berkeley, California), for which Younane contributed a striking cover drawing (through Durrell’s friendship with Henry Miller, there was a Cairo-California connection)” (n.p.) confuses the publication date and overlooks the previous international entanglements of the same work. His energy to draw attention to the work is excellent, particularly for a publication meant to attract the general reader, yet the full context was already elucidated (Gifford *Personal*, 120) and referenced in his source for the information (Bardaouil 169). The book was published in 1946 in the English edition, translated by the British teacher Harold Edwards who was closely connected with the Personal Landscape poets, while Cossery’s *The House of Certain Death* was translated by the equally connected British intelligence officer Erik de Mauny, who associated largely with Waller, who was tied to the New Apocalypse. Earlier excerpts of these translations were published by Fraser (of the New Apocalypse) and Waller, and they were published by the anarchist Circle Editions through the direct intervention of Durrell and Miller based on their pre-war networks. As Durrell relates in his correspondence with Miller, after reading Miller’s intended introduction to and review of *The Men God Forgot*, “The book I sent you is grand and deserves praise... Anyway, your praise came at the right time and put him [Cossery] over in Paris – for which he is deathlessly grateful” (Durrell & Miller 217), and they continued to share Cossery’s work with the intention of publications up to 1949. That the revision to Surrealism is so closely related in its conception of the individual and its antiauthoritarian sentiments to the New Apocalypse and its precursor in Henry Miller’s revision to Surrealism

seems impossible to overlook since it was the networks through the New Apocalypse and Miller's influence that saw these works reach beyond Egypt.

The point is, of course, not to quibble with reviews that should be praised for drawing readers' attention to Bardaouil and Fellrath's recuperation of *Art et Liberté* through the exhibitions. Instead, it is to recognize the symptomatic irruptions of representative oversights that derive from a more than seventy year long critical tradition of elision. As Alexandra Stock notices for Hassan's competing exhibition, "Even if many of the artists in the exhibition changed their worldviews multiple times, such shifts cannot also be applied retroactively to their earlier Egyptian Surrealist works so as to flatten their complicated oeuvres to the most agreeable elements" (n.p.). In the West and Egypt alike, it is a tradition that reads Surrealism and much of the literary and artistic history through a materialist economism that instrumentalizes it and elides the individual. If we emphasize Trotsky and Breton in order to understand *Art et Liberté* through the familiar sense of Surrealism, it is with the overt risk of losing these other networks and of silencing anarchism as a distinct political vision widespread at the time.

Conclusion

To give an improbably long life to degenerate art and send its seeds around the globe, we also need to restore its relations and political complexities. Just as *Art et Liberté*'s slogan drew from Munich, its visual form in its manifesto looked to Spain, and its revisions echoed the Villa Seurat. The improbably mobile Mediterranean vision was then followed a year later by the New Apocalypse, explicitly reaching back to the Villa Seurat, then echoed in the Circle group, and again with similar echoes in neo-Surrealism after the war. For this group in the midst of transferring networks and overlapping affiliations, any sense of alliance is multipolar. With Breton and Trotsky on one side and anarchist post-Surrealism on the other, they further connected with the Italian anti-fascists in Egypt who carried some of the earliest works of Gramsci distributed outside of Italy and were close to the first English translator, Henderson, stationed in Egypt and good friends with Fraser. It is an improbably hybrid juncture, difficult to read if reduced to a single critical paradigm.

The crux, then, is the very Mediterranean nature of *Art et Liberté* in the same sense that Durrell called Alexandria "a hybrid; a joint" (*Justine*, 27). The sea as a mode of transport, a vast liminal joint making the disparate and different somehow contiguous, makes a general arthrology linking anarchist, Trotskyist, Gramscian, Orientalist, decolonizing, anti-racist,

feminist, and other paradigms. The mobility offered by the sea is reflected in the vast migrations of surrealist networks, crossing both distances and time, reaching back to ancestors and offering seeds that would grow elsewhere. The filaments connecting them, however, are the anarchist sense of the individual and an antiauthoritarian value for the individual amidst an ideological critique of social relations of inequity that attend more to the group and conflicts among classes. The vortex of their activities spread in praxis, and we lose vital interpretive possibilities when we understand the wide sea as a barrier and chasm between differences rather than what it really is and has always been: the Mediterranean as a great joint binding together tremendous distances, groups, and histories as contiguous and overlapping realities.

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